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Mary M. Art and F. Edward Mann  
64 Town Line Road  
Burlington, CT 06013

October 6, 2003

Department of State

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing because we have recently learned of proposed Hague Regulations that endanger the future of small adoption agencies.

A little over 14 years ago we adopted our daughter, Carrie, through Thursday's Child, Inc. in Bloomfield, CT. Our entire experience with this small, but wonderful, caring agency has been outstanding. The agency director, Iris Arenson-Fuller, and social workers we worked with during the process were professional in their approach, assuring that they worked to place children in only the most loving, responsible homes. We have always found our questions answered honestly and accurately. We greatly appreciate the many years of knowledge and experience Ms. Arenson-Fuller has.

However, Thursday's Child goes beyond this in letting "clients" know that they have become part of a family. Regular gatherings allow adoptive families to meet one another and they allow adopted children contact with another type of family that facilitates meeting other adopted children of varied backgrounds. We could not have asked for a better experience than the one we had with Thursday's Child. One of us has served on the agency's Board of Directors in the past and another one of us has worked as an adoption counselor.

We selected this small agency instead of one of the larger ones we looked at for several reasons: the personalized service and feeling that we would not be a number. The agency director would know us and know our situation. The agency came highly recommended by others we knew who had adopted. In contrast, those we knew who went to larger agencies often had a negative experience.

The proposed Hague Regulations will make it financially impossible for small agencies to operate. Many of these agencies operate on shoestring budgets, eschewing profits in order to unite waiting parents and children. They cannot afford the fees and the staff time. What is more, regulations such as these take time away from their real objective: facilitating adoption. We do not feel that it is essential for those working on adoption to have a Master's Degree in Social Work. As we interpret these regulations, agencies that do not meet all these requirements and accreditations may be permitted to conduct homestudies, but not to provide services beyond the homestudy, such as post-placements. Again, we feel that this does a great disservice to these agencies who have served their clients so wonderfully as well as to the families that have formed as a result of the work done by these agencies.

We have always observed that parents who adopt children have to go through the intense homestudy process, which necessitates that they submit to an investigation that parents who give birth to their children never experience, and we have observed exceptional parenting among the families we have met through Thursday's Child. However, the proposed Hague Regulations want to demand even more of adoptive parents. As it is, prospective adoptive parents must have medical exams, police checks, home inspections, are asked to read books and watch movies on adoption, in addition to the intense evaluative homestudy process, these regulations propose even more training for adoptive parents! This will only increase the costs to the agencies and to prospective parents, who want only to love and raise children of their own!

***We are opposed to the proposed Hague Regulations*** and we want to see small adoption agencies, who can take the time to truly get to know prospective families and assure that they will provide good homes to adopted children, continue to exist and thrive.

Sincerely,

The block contains two handwritten signatures. The first signature, on the left, is written in a cursive script and appears to read 'Mary M. Art'. The second signature, on the right, is also in cursive and appears to read 'F. Edward Mann'.

Mary M. Art

F. Edward Mann